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Integrating Social Media in Education

Hadewijch Vanwynsberghe
Ghent University

Pieter Verdegem
Ghent University

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Abstract: In their article "Integrating Social Media in Education" Hadewijch Vanwynsberghe and Pieter Verdegem propose a framework in order to integrate social media literacy in an educational setting. In today's networked society students are new media users and hence the relevance in curricula to include social media literacy. Vanwynsberghe and Verdegem propose a multidimensional conceptual framework of social media literacy that includes the practical, cognitive, and affective competencies needed to deal with information of social media, to communicate with others through social media, to create content on social media, and to handle the consequences related to these three activities. On the theoretical level, the construction of social media literacy including its link with the educational system is based on the notion of cultural capital developed by Pierre Bourdieu.

Hadewijch VANWYNSBERGHE and Pieter VERDEGEM

Integrating Social Media in Education

According to Lee Rainie and Berry Wellman Western society is undergoing three major developments: 1) changes in how our social life is organized whereby people no longer belong to fixed groups which remain identical for the rest of one's life, but live in networked individualism (see, e.g., Wellman, Boase, Chen), 2) the internet and the digital changed the way we organize our professional and leisure activities (see, e.g., Barabási), and 3) following the internet and the digital is the development whereby the cell phone and similar devices and better access to the internet lead to an ubiquitous system of communication. One of the consequences of these phenomena is that boundaries of the public and the private blur. Given the combination of the social network revolution, the internet revolution, and the cell phone revolution, it becomes important to investigate how people are using social media and how to integrate social media literacy in education. According to Andreas M. Kaplan and Michael Haenlein social media should be distinguished from related concepts such as Web 2.0 and User-Generated Content (UGC). Web 2.0 is where "content and applications that are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion" (Kaplan and Haenlein 60-61). While Web 2.0 refers to the ideological and technical foundation of social media, User-Generated Content is the phenomenon of the different ways in which people make use of social media. In other words, UGC refers to practices whereby the production of media content is increasingly in hands of end-users. Kaplan and Haenlein define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of User-Generated-Content" (61).

We posit that owing to the consequences of digitalization, the educational system needs to follow. However, before we discuss how the educational system could adapt to the phenomenon of social media, we discuss the theoretical background we use for the framework we propose (on this, see also Vanwynsberghe, Boudry, Verdegem). In this context we make use of the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu. Especially his conception of cultural capital is helpful on this matter. With cultural capital Bourdieu refers to "subtle modalities in the relationship to culture and language" (*Outline* 82). Elaborating on the ideas of Bourdieu, one can argue that social media literacy can be seen as a new type of cultural capital and can consequently be labeled as "cultural capital 2.0." Following Bourdieu we pay attention to the role of the educational system in enhancing young people's social media literacy. Many scholars stress that educators and related professions have a particular responsibility in teaching young people how to deal with new media including social media (see, e.g., Jenkins; Livingstone and Brake; López-Varela Azcárate and Tötösy de Zepetnek; Martens), but this also raises the question how social media literacy could be integrated in the educational setting and how the success of this integration can be measured.

The concept of media literacy has a long tradition in media research (see, e.g., Silverstone). As a concept it was originally invented for traditional mass media, such as print and broadcast media. With the advent of new media technologies, research into media literacy has gained new impulses. In order to discuss both (traditional and new) perspectives on media literacy, we make use of Sonia Livingstone's definition of media literacy: "media literacy is the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and create messages across a variety of contexts" ("The Challenge" 3) and on the basis of these four components — access, analysis, evaluation, and content creation — we develop different perspectives on media literacy. Access as a first prerequisite for the development of media literacy is most commonly used in the meaning of having material access to media technologies (see van Dijk). However, several scholars argued that access should not be seen as only a physical availability for the reason that there are also other dimensions of access (see, e.g., Bakardijeva; Haddon; van Dijk and Hacker). Building on Livingstone's, Jan van Dijk's, and Kenneth Hacker's work, we distinguish three types of access: 1) material access, 2) technical access, and 3) social access. Most interpretations of access are related to the first type of access. Historically, many scholars and especially policymakers were convinced that the problem of inequalities in digital literacy could be simply solved by giving youth access to a personal computer and an internet connection in schools. Soon, however, it became clear that providing material access was not enough to enhance people's level of media literacy (see

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van Dijk). Closely linked to material access is the instrumental-technological dimension of access that reduces media use to its occurrence and only focuses on the required handlings needed to access the respective media technology. This technological approach on media literacy received much attention with the arrival of new media when suddenly new practical competencies which appeared to be difficult were required. This approach to media literacy appears in the definitions of computer literacy defined as the basic forms of computer and network operation or the narrow set of practical competencies related to computer operation such as turning on a computer and saving and opening files (see Warschauer).

Access is increasingly conceptualized as a phenomenon that rests on dynamic and social processes. Various studies have demonstrated the very different social reasons for (not) accessing media technologies, such as financial constraints (see Haddon and Silverstone, *Lone Parents*), support of social networks (see Bakardijeva; Haddon, *Everyday Life),* attitudes of family members (see Livingstone, *Young People*; Livingstone and Helsper), family composition (see Haddon and Livingstone, *Lone Parents*), the work situation (see Haddon and Silverstone, *Teleworking*; Ward), and peer influence (see Nathanson). Hence, in order to understand access to media technologies we need to appreciate the negotiation and interaction between the user and people from the immediate vicinity. For example, in schools the peer group and their values and opinions can determine the students' choices to access and use a certain media technology. Thus we suggest that different levels of quality of access to media technology are possible and that the quality of access depends on material, technical, and social resources.

Many definitions of media literacy include the importance of being able to analyze and evaluate the content that is consumed via these media technologies and thus we discuss the analysis and evaluation components of media literacy together because they are interconnected. For example, imagine a user who screens media messages in terms of reliability, bias, accuracy, and errors, but who is unable to judge critically the right and useful messages in an abundance of information. Therefore, these two components of media literacy are often combined using the term "critical media literacy" (see Keller and Share). David Buckingham proposed a conceptual framework for understanding critical literacy and he outlines a six-fold scheme of questions which students in education must address when analyzing a written text message: media agency, media categories, media technologies, media audiences, and media representations ("Media Education"). After answering these questions students should be able to make an evaluation of a written text in terms of its usability and accuracy. However, when confronted with new media technologies we must recognize that this framework is too restricted to traditional media since the analytic repertoire (e.g., genre, narrative, literary merit) is dependent on print media.

In order to deal with this shortcoming, in *Five Key Questions That Can Change the World* Jeff Share, Tessa Jolls, and Elizabeth Thoman developed a framework adapted to the critical use of new media technologies and they introduced the following conceptual questions: Who has created the message? What creative techniques are used to attract the attention? How many different people understand this message differently? What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented this message? Why is the message being sent? (19). Again, it can be argued that this framework is too restricted to social media since it ignores the person as a sender itself. Hence we affirm Livingstone's argumentation when she states that "At present, not only is a parallel account of Internet-related analytic skills highly underdeveloped but the public has yet to develop such skills and so to make the most of online opportunities" ("What Is" 5). Further, various scholars indicate that the ability to analyze and evaluate media content lies at the core of media literacy and consequently of media education and that there is still work to be done in applying the existing frameworks of analytic competencies to new media technologies (see, e.g., Jenkins). A term that relates to critical literacy is "information literacy": it was first used in the context of the library, but with the rise of the internet as a seemingly infinite source of information the concept of information literacy gains more urgency (see Catts and Lau; Sharpio and Hughes). In this respect, information literacy highlights the importance of the identification of the problem, the location where information can be found, the evaluation of the information, and the use of this information in problem solving (see Livingstone, Van Couvering, Thumim). This is a prescriptive and formulaic description of critical media literacy, which is based on

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the assumption of a formally expressed need of information. However, people do not always have an information need in advance and it is also possible that information just comes around.

In order to develop the critical approach to media literacy, we must combine the above insights. Critical literacy is the analysis of media messages through a critical evaluation of the producer, the purpose, the used technology, the audience, and representations of the message. This way, the usefulness and credibility of messages can be evaluated. Since almost anyone can create content through the internet, teaching critical literacy becomes even more complex and crucial. In this context of analysis and evaluation, media literacy can be seen as a cognitive competence while in the access component of media literacy it is seen as a practical competence. Another more recent component of media literacy is content creation (see Eshet-Alkalai; Warschauer). In "What Is Media Literacy" Livingstone claims that the inclusion of content creation is essential because it facilitates the development of other components of media literacy, namely access, analysis, and evaluation. Experiencing directly the process of content creation would give more insight in the conventions and merits of the produced material and this way the user becomes a better technical and critical consumer and producer. Hence, content creation should account for higher levels of media literacy than only media consumption (see Pang and Schaefer).

Content creation itself is too often neglected in media literacy conceptualizations and certainly so in the context of pedagogy (see, e.g., Jenkins). Excluding creation from a media literacy definition would "greatly under-utilize the potential of the Internet" (Livingstone, "The Challenge" 3) especially in the era of social media when people have the opportunity to be both consumers and producers of media content. For the relevance of it in the educational context, four arguments can be distinguished: 1) the pedagogic argument, namely that youth learns best through making it by their own, 2) the employment argument that people who are able to create media messages themselves become more valuable in the labor market, 3) the cultural argument that citizens have the right to self-expression and cultural participation, and 4) the political argument that the creation of media messages stimulates democracy and active citizenship. Those who have little or no competencies to produce effectively and efficiently content can be excluded from positive outcomes that social media has to offer. In other words, teaching youth the abilities how to produce content is more crucial than ever.

Livingstone's definition of media literacy provides a framework for understanding both traditional and new perspectives on media literacy. Following Livingstone, we define social media literacy as the practical, cognitive, and affective competencies needed to access, analyze, evaluate, and create social media content across a variety of contexts. However, in order to further conceptualize social media literacy, we must grasp the implications of the social media culture. As suggested above, we cannot ignore the ubiquity of the role of user participation in social media. Henry Jenkins termed this observation "participatory culture" characterized by people's active participation in selecting, creating, critiquing, and sharing media content. However, we do need to acknowledge that not everyone acts as a producer of media content and that there are also people who only consume media content. Hence, we argue that both types of media cultures — consumer and participatory — complement rather than substitute each other. The case of the matter is that changes can be observed in how people use media in order to communicate with other people, to entertain, and to search for information. For this reason current approaches to media literacy need to be revisited in order to comply with this rapidly changing and increasingly complex new media ecology. In order to further conceptualize social media literacy, we postulate three implications of participatory social media culture: 1) the applicability of existing approaches on media literacy to participatory social media culture, 2) the difference between the use of social media and the use of other media, and 3) the shift from an exclusive focus on the receiver to a focus on the interaction between the media (content) and the active user.

The first implication relates to the applicability of existing approaches on media literacy for conceptualizing social media literacy. Social media enable convergence among separate traditional and new media activities such as chatting, e-mail, uploading and downloading of content, watching movies, reading and updating diaries, and website creation. As the simple distinction between traditional and new media does no longer apply to the complex activities on social media, we need to conceptualize social media literacy: social media literacy should be considered as a continuum with

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progressive stages where practical competencies are only the first steps in social media literacy. The upper end of the continuum relates to enhancing the levels of critical cognitive competencies needed to analyze and evaluate social media content. Given that the user acquires more control over media content, a critical use of that content becomes more important: "Now that almost anyone can produce and disseminate Internet contents, with fewer-and different kinds of-filters, the basis of critical literacy must alter" (Livingstone, "What Is" 5). Thus, both cognitive and practical competencies are of equal importance in social media literacy. For social media literacy in pedagogy this implication means that instructors must expand the required competencies and not push aside the cognitive competencies to make more room for the new practical competencies needed to operate and participate in social media.

The second implication concerns the difference between the use of social media and the use of traditional media. Social media are characterized by an active participation of the user: it requires the production, communication, collaboration, and transaction of media content (see Jenkins; Kaplan and Haenlein). In this context the classic sender-message-receiver communication model is no longer sustainable. Manuel Castells indicates this by pointing to the shift from one-way mass communication and personal communication to mass self-communication. Social media facilitate mediated communication that can be characterized as increasingly proliferated, fragmented, and personalized. However, we argue that the three forms of media, i.e., mass-, interpersonal-, and mass self-communication complement rather than substitute each other. Nevertheless, we cannot neglect that using social media requires a new form of communication that is different in comparison with mass- and interpersonal communication. This new form of communication refers to "a set of open, web-based and user-friendly applications that enable users to network, share data, collaborate and co-produce content" (Punie, Lusoli, Centeno, Misuraca, Broster 136). Social media literacy must be expanded with these new competencies including the abilities to self-create content, share this content, and to collaborate with others online. A challenge in this is to not conceptualize these new competencies as practical skills only and the cognitive and critical side of producing and sharing self-made content on social media are also needed.

The third implication of the participatory social media culture is the shift from an exclusive focus on the receiver to a focus on the interaction between the media (content) and the active user. With this we recognize that the relationship between technology and the user cannot result exclusively from practical and cognitive requirements: the emotional involvement of users has to be taken into account as well (see, e.g., Buckingham, *Media*). Building on Livingstone's and van Dijk's work, we acknowledge the importance of mental aspects in a definition of social media literacy. This is so because using social media requires more interaction of the user in comparison to other media. In *Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture* Buckingham postulates that media literacy in education cannot focus on a narrow set of knowledge structures which youth somehow will learn and that the emotional involvement of young people with media is of equal importance. The relationship between the technology and the user should not result from the technology and its practical requirements, but should be judged by how youngsters experience the technology, how technology serves man best, as well as by its advantages and disadvantages for the individual. Buckingham's argumentation suggests that social media literacy in education requires more attention for the affective competencies or the consideration of students' abilities and needs.

Being confronted with the challenges of the participatory social media culture, it is clear that people need specific competencies for being able to fully participate in contemporary society. In this context, we adopt Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital as the lens for looking at these competencies. In Bourdieu's theoretical framework the concept of cultural capital includes the familiarity with the dominant culture in society (see *Outline*, "The Forms"). The traditional interpretation of Bourdieu's term cultural capital corresponds with cultural tastes and styles as participation in activities such as literature, the art fair, the concert, theater, and opera (see Sullivan) and he argues that participating in these activities leads to the development of certain knowledge and skills, or literacy, which should enable students to succeed at school and even in the bigger society (see Bourdieu, "Ecole"; Bourdieu and Passeron). However, the traditional conceptualization of cultural capital does not correspond anymore to the dominant culture of current society and thus in

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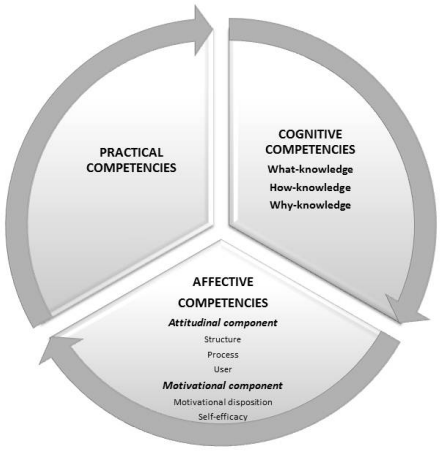
contemporary culture other competencies are needed as social media becomes paramount. Hence, social media literacy or being able to deal with this new source of information makes a new form of cultural capital. Moreover, the skills and competencies required in the educational system are no longer connected to participation in "highbrow" culture such as museums, art fairs, or theater. Teachers too easily and often assume wrongly that all young people are capable of dealing with social media and spend little attention to this topic in the classroom. School curricula are not yet adapted to this and while compulsory education obliges all children to read and write, learning how to deal with social media is not a component of current educational curricula. In contrast, scholars point to the advantages these new technologies could have for empowering learners (e.g., collaboration and information exchange) and for learning itself (see, e.g., Jenkins; Martens). Unfortunately, evidence on how to bring this into reality is still scarce.

For our conceptual framework for social media literacy we base our definition on Livingstone's work because the framework complies with the three implications of participatory social media culture. First, the definition is applicable to both traditional and new perspectives on media literacy. Second, Livingstone also takes into account creativity as a valued ability in the current social media environment, and third, the definition also focuses on the mental aspect that plays a role when accessing and using media. We propose a conceptual framework that consists of three blocks: 1) cognitive, 2) practical, and 3) affective competencies: see Figure 1. In contrast to Livingstone, we do not include creativity because content creation cannot be seen as a separate competence as it is already a combination of practical, cognitive, and affective competencies. It must rather be seen as a form of social media literacies (i.e., creative literacy):

Figure 1



The framework is visualized as a circle because each competence in it supports the others as a part of a non-linear, dynamic learning process. Cognitive competencies to analyze and evaluate social media content rest on practical competencies to open and read content and a positive attitude towards this behavior. For each of the three competencies in the framework there are sub-competencies so that they can easily be integrated in an educational setting.

Cognitive competencies include knowledge as the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Based on James Potter's and Everett M. Rogers's work, the division most relevant for this cognitive category comprises the what-knowledge and the more critical how-(to-)knowledge and why-knowledge. What-knowledge is the descriptive and practical knowledge with a low degree of self-conscious awareness, while the components of critical knowledge contain knowledge about why social media applications operate as they do, the understanding of media context, and knowledge about the knowledge (meta-knowledge). What-knowledge can be described as basic knowledge needed to access media technologies, content, or services. This means, for instance, knowing what privacy settings are relevant and knowing what steps one needs to take to change them. How- and

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why-knowledge involve the use of analytical logic and critical thinking. We termed the combination of both types of knowledge as critical cognitive competence. This cognitive competence is similar to critical literacy we discuss above. In order to gain more insight in this critical cognitive competence we rely on the framework of Share, Jolls, and Thoman whose framework is useful, but in our opinion is too restricted for social media since it ignores the person as a sender him/herself. Therefore we expand the questions of the framework of Share, Jolls, and Thoman and posit that young people need knowledge about the producer of social media messages, the public, the techniques used in media messages, the symbols and text in order to be able to understood, the (political, cultural, social, and historical) background of the message and of the producer of the message, the reasons for sending the message, and so on.

Cognitive competencies cannot be discussed separately from practical competencies. Imagine for instance a user who is able to analyze a text, but is unable to open or to react on the text: practical competencies are the manual agility and the technical use of social media tools and applications. It involves the competencies needed to deal with the technology, while cognitive competencies are needed to deal with the social media content. Based on Alexander van Deursen's and van Dijk's work, we posit that operational practical competencies concern the operation of social media applications, for example being able to open a social media application by entering the URL in the browser or being able to tag a photograph on a social media website by pushing the right button. While cognitive and practical competencies play an important role when engaging with social media, they are not the only factor relating to users' individual social media literacy: affective aspects are also relevant (see Fishbein and Ajzen; Taylor and Todd). The final action of how young people apply cognitive and practical competencies is dependent on how students evaluate this actual behavior. Hence, we include attitudes as a competence in social media literacy arguing that attitudes can determine people's actual behavior. On the other hand, there is evidence that attitudes can change. Robert M. Gagne defined attitudes as an internal state that influences the choice of actual behavior. Accepting this definition, we extend affective competence of social media literacy with motivation. We believe this postulate is consistent with Gagne's classification because motivation is an internal state that can affect behavior.

We make a distinction between attitudes towards structure, process, and users of social media. This distinction is based on the division that Sally J. McMillan's and Edward J. Downes's work to conceptualize people's perception of interactivity on social media. Attitudes towards the structure of social media represent personal opinions on the typical characteristics of social media such as creativity, interactivity, and community development. For example, if a student evaluates group communication on a chat page as something good or bad, this can make a difference as to how he/she deals with social media. Further, attitudes towards the process of exchanging information can also play an important role in students' level of social media literacy. For example, if a student evaluates the exchange of personal information as something potentially risky, then a possible reaction of the student can be to guard him/herself against this risk by, for example, adapting his/her privacy settings. Drawing on Ike Picone's findings, we posit that practices of interactivity, especially in the case of social media, are also interpret in relation to the potential audience of a person's content creation online. This leads us to the last attitude, namely the attitudes towards users of social media. It is not only the difficulty of writing a reaction or comment on a blog that prevents users from doing this, but it may also be due to the anxiety or fear of the (reaction of) potential users.

The second type of affective competencies concerns motivation. We distinguish two motivational outcomes: motivational dispositions and self-efficacy. Motivational dispositions for dealing with social media in a participatory and critical way are characterized by the concern for enhancing one's skills to do a certain task well and/or to gain a positive evaluation or reaction by others. However, this is not the only motivation for young people for enhancing their level of media literacy or behave in a media literate way: self-efficacy is also a factor. Self-efficacy refers to people's belief in their own knowledge and skills to successfully perform certain actions (see Eastin and LaRose <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2000.tb00110.x>). People's self-efficacy towards online activities is generally believed to be task-specific and is assumed to influence one's choice of practices, task performance, spent effort, and frequency of use (see Bandura; Broos and Roe; Livingstone and Helsper).

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Following our above argumentation, media literacy must involve the acquisition of cognitive, practical, and affective competencies in order to participate in social media competently. The three competencies should be taught to students adapted to the different actions which are possible through social media, namely searching and dealing with information on social media, communicating with others through social media, and creating content on social media. In the teaching of social media literacy teachers should not only focus on the competencies to adequately perform these actions or forms of social media literacy, they must also take into account the competencies to deal with the consequences related to social media use, for instance the disclosure of personal information and processes of commodification. We locate both under the heading of consequences as in some activities they are interrelated with each other. For instance, people must be aware that commercial interests shape the order of listing on search engines or provide targeted advertisement on social media. When people search for information they leave personal information that can be (mis)used by commercial entities for targeted advertisement (see, e.g., Fuchs). Dealing with the consequences of using social media encompasses the abilities to analyze and evaluate critically what happens to personal data and evaluate what one shares with whom and how to adapt behavior to this judgment (for example changing privacy settings). Hence, dealing with the consequences of social media use can also be seen as a fourth form of social media literacy.

In conclusion, traditional cultural capital is reduced in importance while new competencies necessary to deal with social media, become relevant and important. It is a misunderstanding that all young people have extensive social media competencies and the opposite is true which makes them potentially vulnerable. The proposed multidimensional conceptual framework of social media literacy contains the suggestion that students acquire cognitive, practical, and affective competencies. In an educational setting the focus must be on the combination of these three competencies in order to deal with four distinctive types of social media use: 1) to search for or to deal with information on social media, 2) to communicate with other people through social media, 3) to create content on social media, and to 4) deal with the consequences related to these three activities including the matter of the disclosure of personal information and commodification. As these competencies can be translated to concrete measurable indicators, the study at hand serves as an impetus for further theoretical and applied research where the challenge is to develop a more precise measurement of social media literacy. Given that we consider the latter as a form of cultural capital, we need innovative methods which are based on the objective observation of competencies relevant in terms of enabling and advancing student's position and behavior in society.

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Authors' profile: Hadewijch Vanwynsberghe is working towards her doctorate in communication sciences at Ghent University. Her fields of interests include the measurement of (social) media literacy, social media use, digital inclusion, and theories of sociology. Vanwynsberghe's recent publications include (with Cédric Courtois and Anissa All), "Social Network Profiles as Information Sources for Adolescents' Offline Relations," *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* (2012). E-mail: <hadewijch.vanwynsberghe@ugent.be>

Authors' profile: Pieter Verdegem teaches communication studies at Ghent University. His interests in research include social media, new media, digital policies and governance. Verdegem's recent publications include (with Cédric Courtois and Lieven De Marez), "The Triple Articulation of Media Technologies in Audiovisual Media Consumption," *Television and New Media* (2013) and "Social Media for Digital and Social Inclusion: Challenges for Information Society 2.0 Research & Policies," *TripleC: Cognition, Communication, Co-operation* (2011). E-mail: <pieter.verdegem@ugent.be>

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